

OLD POPERY

As GOOD as

NEW.

OR

The Unreasonableness of the CHURCH
of ENGLAND in some of
Her

Doctrines and Practices,

And the Reasonableness of

Liberty of Conscience.

*In a Letter from a Private Gentleman in the Country to his
Friend a Clergy-Man in the City.*

Magnam Chartam dedit Henricus, Majorem Dabit
Chartam Jacobus.

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OLD POPEZ

1871

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23 Oct. 53 Rumpus

Worthy SIR,

THough I am a Friend to the Church of *England*, and Conformable to her Establishments, as the Law obligeth me, yet I have a greater Friendship for true Religion in the general in what Habit or Dress soever I find it, and amongst whatsoever different Opinions and Perswasions, I do not think any one sort of Men do ingross all true Religion to themselves. *Apollos* and *Cephas* had I doubt not as good Christians amongst their Followers as *Paul* himself had. Their fault was want of Good-will one towards another, though of different Sects. The Sincere Consciencious Man, that is Pious to his God, and Honest and Just to his Neighbour; the Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile, where-ever I find him, whether at the Altar with his Beads, or in the Publick Church, or in the Private Conventicle, this is the Man I take to be a good Christian, and a Member of that *Catholick Church* in which I believe. And being thus perswaded, I have often with a melancholy Heart observed and reflected upon the troubled state of Religion in this Nation for

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several

several Years past, and the dire Consequences that have been amongst us of our severe *Penal Laws*, in matters of Religion, made to Gratifie one party of Men only, and to Suppress and Ruin all the rest. I could not without Compassionate and Bleeding Thoughts see and hear of so many Persons of Sober and Vertuous Lives, and (as I cannot but believe) very good Christians, to be stript of their Goods and Estates, their Persons Imprisoned, or at least forc'd to Quit and Fly from their Habitations, and their Wives and Children Undone and brought to Want, and all because they could not Conform to the Impositions of this one Partry of Men. And these Thoughts have sometimes led me further to consider how consistent Laws of this Nature are with Christianity and Policy. If the things Imposed be in their own nature indifferent to be done or not done, then methinks it can hardly be good Christianity to Impose them, and seems to be quite contrary to the sence of St Paul in his Epistle to the *Romans*, chap. 14. If necessary that Legislation ought to be Infalible that will impose any thing as such. Nay even then they ought not to be Imposed, for to force me to change my Opinion is out of the Power of a Law, and even out of my own Power to do; and to act con-

contrary to my Opinion and Conscience is not fit
 sure for a Christian Legislation to Impose. And for
 the Policy of it, most certainly it can't be good.
 All Laws ought to be levell'd at the common good
 of the People, and as comprehensive as may be for
 all Interests, & this renders a Government Safe and
 Steady: But when Laws are made with regard
 only to a particular-party of Men, and against the
 Interest and Inclination of as great or a greater
 Number, this in probability must render a Govern-
 ment Hazardous and Unstable. And this we find
 by woful Experience does continue and heighten
 our Divisions, and makes our Breaches wider. It
 puts a Difficulty upon the Prince too, that he must
 necessarily Govern with the Disgust and Discon-
 tent of a great part of his People. Nay, and
 perhaps to his own Discontent and Dissatisfaction
 also. For a Mild and Merciful Prince cannot de-
 light in Executing Severity, and a Prince of tender
 Conscience may perhaps doubt whether Laws of
 this Nature be not void *in foro Conscientiæ*. and there-
 fore not to be put in Execution. But before I
 can think these thoughts, though I fancy my self
 interrupted by a Zealous Church of *England-Man*,
 who comes full Mouth to tell the necessity of these
Penal Laws, for that some of the Dissenters from
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the establish'd Religion own a Forraign Power, and the rest are Factionous, and Seditious, and of Rebellious Principles; but the *Church of England* is Loyal, and a'ways was. A great thing this to be said for the *Church of England*, that when they have had the Prince and the Laws on their side they have always been extraordinary Loyal. But turn the Tables and see what they are then. The late King did but set out a Declaration for Indulging tender Consciencs, and how did they Rant and Rave against it both in their Pulpit & Private Discourses? How did they animate the Parliament to oppose the King in it, and were not quiet till that good King did recal his Declaration? And how do they now, upon occasion of the present *Liberty of Conscience*, question even those Powers and Prerogatives in the Prince, that they themselves (when it serv'd for their purpose) did so vigorously Preach up? And all this Bustle and Stir when their Livings and Persement's are in no danger, but only their Power of Afflicting their Brethren restrained. What would these Men do if their Lives, Estates and Liberties were in danger by Laws made against them, as are now against others? Then they would without doubt be as great Male contents to the Government, and endeavour

endeavour as much to evade such Laws, and avoid their Passive Obedience to them, and consequently deserve as much the Epithets of Factious and Seditious, and Disaffected to the Government as ever their Dissenting Brethren did. 'Tis against Humane Nature willingly to be Miserable. And no Man can be easie under those Laws that would undo him. And is it my fault that I am thus Uneasie? Or is it not rather the mistake of the Legislators to impose Laws that I cannot obey, and therefore must unwillingly suffer under? Upon the whole matter, I could not but conclude these Impositions in matters of Religion to be Unchristian, the Penal Laws that enforce them to be Impolitic, and the extraordinary Loyalty of the *Church of England* (by colour whereof she procur'd them) to be a meer Sham and Pretence. I proceed then to consider and reflect upon some of the Doctrines and Practises of this Loyal *Church of England*, with relation to those that differ from her; wherein I found her, as I thought, liable to many Objections, which occasioned this Letter to my Friend. And therein I thought it not Impertinent to take notice of our extraordinary Happiness in a Prince of that great and noble Principle of *Liberty of Conscience*, the reasonableness of that Principle, and the

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unreasonableness and mistake of our *Penal Laws*, which were design'd to Unite, but do in truth more Divide us, and therefore are very fitly Suspended by the King, till they may be Repealed by Act of Parliament. *Sir*, Having lately read some most Ingenious Papers (supposed to be yours) upon this Subject of *Liberty of Conscience*, and perswading my self that in many of these things my thoughts do concur with yours, I present this Paper to you desiring you, if you think fit, to cause it to be Printed. For my part I dare not think it worth Printing, nor, if I did, do I know how to get it done, being a private Gentleman in the Country, that never was in Print, nor now otherwise ambitious of it, then that I may tell the World how much I am, *Sir*,

Your most humble Servant

October 19. 2
1687. *3*

R. R.

SIR,

SIR,

Amongst all the Polemick Discourses, that are abroad betwixt the Church of *England* and the Church of *Rome*, I wonder that some things are not objected by the Papists against the Church of *England*, which methinks she is very obnoxious to, and which I would gladly be able to Answer if Objected. And because I know you to be a Zealous Son of, the Church of *England*, and as able as any Body to defend her in her Principles and Practices, I apply my self to you for satisfaction herein. Nor should I have given you this trouble, but that I find our Vicar (who is no very mean Man neither, his Parts being better in proportion then his Preferments) is hard put to it to give me a satisfactory Answer.

We Charge the *Papists* with *Idolatry* in Worshipping Images and Pictures of our Saviour and his Cross, &c. But in the mean time we do not consider that we may as well be blamed our selves for Bowing at the Name of Jesus, Bowing to the Altar, Kneeling at the Lords Prayer at the end of other Prayers, and putting off our Hats at Church when no Divine Service there, &c. The first of which, *viz.* Bowing at the Name of Jesus is established by a Cannon, and the rest are so much the constant Practice of the Church of *England*, that I never knew either Bishop or dignifi'd Clergy-Man, or any other thought worthy to be such, but those that Practis'd them. I expect you'll tell me, that there can be no hurt in these things, for that when we hear the Name of Jesus it puts us in mind of our Blessed Saviour, to whom we do the

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Reverence

Reverence of Bowing. For Bowing to the Altar or Communion-Table, that is the place whereon the Bread and Wine are Consecrated, and where the Sacrament of the Lords Supper is Administred, and thereby our Saviour and his Passion particularly Commemorated, and therefore surely to pay a Reverence to that place can have no harm in it. For Kneeling at the Lords Prayer too in conclusion of other Prayers, it is the form of Prayer that Christ himself taught us, and Sanctified with his own Lips, and to do a Reverence to him when we pronounce those Words can have no hurt in't one would think. And for putting off our Hats in Churches, when no Divine Service there, sure that can be no harm neither, to pay a Reverence in that place that is consecrated and set apart for the Worship of the Deity.

These things seem pausable, and have along time past for Currant. But for my part, when I consider what difference there is betwixt our Bowing at the Name of *Jesus*, and the *Papists* Bowing to the Image or Picture of *Jesus*, I can find none but this, *viz.* The difference of the outward sence by which the thought of our Saviour is conveyed to our Understanding. For as upon sight of his Effigies the *Papists* Worship, so upon hearing of his Name we Worship also. 'Tis true this Worship of ours cannot be call'd Idolatry, the signification of the Word wo'nt bear it; but I take the Venom of Idolatry to be a mis-plac't Worship; and if the *Papist* in Bowing to that which represents our Saviour to his Sence of Seeing be guilty of it, I doubt, when by the sound of his Name *Jesus* he is represented to my Sence of Hearing, and I Worship also, I'm hardly Innocent.

In Bowing to the Altar too, because the Sacrament of the Lords Supper is there Administred, and the Passion of

of our Saviour is there Commemorated; what do I less then the *Papist* Bowing to the Crucifix, whereby the Passion of our Saviour is to him more sensibly represented? And if Bow to the Altar, because that Sacrament is there Administred, why not to the Font also, where the other Sacrament of Baptism is also Administred? Some will excuse this Bowing to the Altar, by calling it Bowing to the *East*, and pretend to give some insignificant Reasons why we should do so. Others will tell you of a relative Holiness in Places and Things, and excuse it that way. But I would ask, If Bowing to the *East* be the reason, why no such Bowing in Churches where the Communion-Table stands in the Body of the Church? If because of the relative Holiness, why has not the Font as good a title to this relative Holiness, and consequently to the same respect the Altar hath? And what is this relative Holiness more in any thing then its being Consecrated and set a part for Sacred Uses? And must we Worship any thing for this? Upon the same reason the Parsons may by degrees challenge some sort of extraordinary respect to themselves, being by their Ordination set apart for Sacred Services. Methinks 'twere better for the Church of *England* to speak plain English, and confess she Bow's to the Altar for the same reason the *Papists* do. They do it because they hold that after Consecration the Wafer and Wine are become the real Body and Blood of Christ, so that the real Christ is present there. And this without all doubt was the beginning of it in the Church of *England*. We had it from *Rome*, and in truth we keep it still upon the same reason they do, though we conceal, and will not own it. The real Presence that we hold in the Sacrament, what to make of it I can't imagine but Transubstantiation, or somewhat yet more strange. For what difference is there

betwixt the real Christ being present by the Transubstantiating Power of the Popish-Priests Consecration, & Christs being really present by the as unintelligible Power of our Church of *England* Priests Consecration? Is it not as great a Miracle, for a Church of *England* Priest, by his Words of Consecration, to fetch down Christ from Heaven, and to circumscribe his Omni-present Deity to the Communion-Table, as for the Popish-Priest, by his Consecration, to translate the Bread and Wine into Christs real Body and Blood? And when we have his real Presence there, how comes it that in the Sacrament we really receive his Body and his Blood? It must be by Transubstantiation sure, or somewhat less intelligible even then that. Now that there is a real Presence in the Sacrament, and that we receive the Body and Blood of Christ verily and indeed, in the Opinion of the Church of *England*, I will only cite you the last Church of *England* Author that I read, and that is the late Published Exposition of the *Church-Catechism*, Compos'd for the Diocess of *Bath and Wells*, Page 75, and 76. He indeed there confesseth it Unintelligible, and makes some Pious Ejaculations thereupon. And what need there is to make or think this Sacrament so Unintelligible I protest I know not. Most certainly our Saviour in his Institution of it nere meant it so: When he said, *Eat, this is my Body, and Drink, this is my Blood*: He little thought that the Pronoun (*my*) should occasion these Doctrines of Transubstantiation and the Real Presence; if he had, he surely would not have given those other Directions, *viz, That as oft as we do it we should do it in Remembrance of Him*: Remembrance being only of Persons and Things absent and not present. He surely did intend it a plain and easie thing both to be done and understood. As if he had said, *I for your sakes have*
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left those heavenly Mansions where my Father dwells, and where I sat at his Right Hand, enjoying equally Eternal Bliss in Unity with him; and am from thence come down to put on Human Nature here, and to become Obnoxious to all the Frailties and Infirmities thereof, even to Death it self. This Body of mine must be Bruised for your Iniquities, and my Blood spilt for your Sins. Nay I must Eye the Death too, even the accursed Death of the Cross, (a Death more due to you) that I may rescue you from Death Eternal. And therefore when I am Dead and Gone I would have you Meet, and Eat and Drink sometimes together, and remember me. When you break Bread, remember this Body of mine that was Wounded for your sakes; and when you Drink, remember also my Blood that was for your sakes Shed. Remember that bitter Cup that I drank of; those horrid Agonies that I endured to satisfy the Divine Vengeance due to you. And when you do this, repent of, and forsake your Sins that brought me to it, and believe in me, and rely upon this Satisfaction and Attonement thus made for you. So shall you Eat and Drink Worthily: So shall you Grow and Encrease in Grace: So shall your Souls be Nourish'd and Preserv'd to Everlasting Life; and so shall my Flesh be to you Meat indeed, and my Blood Drink indeed. This seems to me to be the sole and whole intent and meaning of our Saviour, when he instituted this holy Festival of the Lords Supper, viz. Thankfully to commemorate his Death and Passion, and to believe in him. How the Immortal God could become Man and Dye for us is the great Mystery to be Admired and Believed. That God was made Man and did Dye for us is the great Mercy to be Remembred and Ador'd. Now by these Notions of Transubstantiation and the Real Presence we make our Commemoration as Mysterious as the thing Commemorated, and consequently the practical part of our Religion,

which should be plain and easie, does become difficult and unintelligible. 'Tis good Craft in the Priesthood to make it so, who thereby make themselves so much the more Necessary, by how much the more Mysterious they make our Religion. And if they would set to it, and make the best use of all those Figurative, and Metaphorical, and other Rhetorical Expressions that are in the Scriptures, and take them Litterally, they may furnish us with Mysteries good store. But enough of this matter.

Now for the **Kneeling** at the Lords Prayer at the end of other Prayers which are said Standing. What may this mean I trow? Do we vary the object of our Devotion when we use the Lords Prayer? Do we not in our other Prayers before it pray to the same God? Why not then the same Reverent Posture at one Prayer as at another? Nay, methinks if any difference ought to be, the most Reverent Posture should be used when we do our Devotions in our own imperfect Words and Forms, and when we use that absolute Form our Saviour taught us, one would think we rather might approach the Throne of Grace more boldly.

And when we put off our Hats in the Church, when there is no Divine Service there, to what purpose is it, and to whom do we do that Respect? If to the Deity, why do we walk and talk, and transact other matters there at the same time, as Parish Business, &c. If not to the Deity, to whom or what else? I doubt there can no good account be given of it. Yet I am told of a tantivy Country Parson in *Northamptonshire*, who being lately very angry with an honest Neighbour of his, for keeping on his Hat, at a Parish Meeting, in the Church, and being restrained from his usual and proper course of Revenge, by the Kings late gracious Declaration of Indulgence, he prevailed with a young Baronet

Baronet (his Patron and his Neighbours Landlord) to turn his Neighbour out of his Farm (where he had Lived long, and paid his Rent well) to his no small Damage. A wise Landlord, and a precious Parson in the mean time, I'll warrant You.

Another Objection I have against our Church of *England*, *Is the Singing their Prayers in their Cathedral Service.* We blame the *Papists* for Praying in an unknown Tongue, and what is this less? It is Intelligible to none but those whose Business it so much is, that I doubt it is but little their Devotion. And yet we tell the *Papists*, that all publick Devotion ought to be Intelligible to all, and therefore not in Latine; and therefore say I too, not in this noisie confused manner that can't be understood.

Then there's the business of the Cross in Baptism, very lyable to Exception. *I Sign thee with the Sign of the Cross* (says the Church of *England*) *in token that thou shalt become Christs Souldier and Servant, and manfully Fight under his Banner, &c.* *I Sign myself with the Sign of the Cross* (says the *Papists*) *when in Danger, and upon such like Occasions, in token that my Faith and Trust is in my Blessed Saviour, that he that hath set me free from the Bondage and Slavery of Sin and Satan, can and will preserve me from all outward Dangers.* Pray where's the difference?

Another thing I object against the Church of *England*, which I find in the Exposition of the *Church Catechisms*, that I mentioned before, page 28. where he tells us of the Saints Praying for us in Heaven, whilst we are Celebrating their Memorials here. If they can pray for us and do us kindness, sure we may pray to them to do it. And so in that point I think we are very good Catholicks.

One thing more I must not omit to mention, which methinks is very scandalous in our Church of *England*, and that

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is the slight regard we have to the *Sabbath-Day* or *Sunday*. With what industry we have endeavoured to suppress the Observation of that Day, the Book of Sports heretofore published and publickly read in Churches, and the several Books written against the *Sunday-Sabbath*, by Eminent Church-Men, may sufficiently shew. And at this Day it is enough to brand any Man for a *Fanatick* or *Whig* if he be for the strict Observation of that Day, or for twice Preaching on that Day. How many Ministers have been upbraided with it even at Visitations? It is the Opinion of many Learned Men, that the Observation of this Day is of Divine Institution, which makes it at least probable; and therefore how unseemly is it in us, who are a Reformed Church, so much to discountenance the Observation of this Day (as if we were afraid of being too Religious) when at the same time we exact the strict Observation of some other Days acknowledged on all hands to be purely of Humane Institution.

These and many other things in practice with us are so like the Church of *Rome* that it seems meer Obstinacy in us that we are not the same with them. And certainly all Standers by, that have observed for these twenty six Years past what we have Preach't and Practiced, have thought us that way bent. But they were quite mistaken I perceive. We are for a Popery of our own, a Yoke of our own making that we would have the slavish Laity to wear. And 'twas for this that we have procured to be made and executed those *Penal Laws*, which now the World (too early for our purpose) does see through. And to this end we have Preach'd up and taught that wholesome Doctrine of Prayers and Tears by others, to be Practic'd not our selves. 'Tis strange to me, I must confess, why we should retain such semblances of Popery, and those so

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unaccountable; and yet so eagerly oppose Popery it self. The Apes the Uglier Creature much because most like the Noblest Creature Man. And for my part I think our Apish Ceremonies and Superstitions are so like those of *Rome* that they're the worse again. And truly if we must have so many Ceremonies in our Religion, give me Old Popery rather than New: Those Ceremonies of the *Roman Church*, Approv'd and Practiced by so much the greater part of the Christian World for many Ages past, rather than those trivial upstart Mimmickries of them practiced only within the narrow Limits of the Church of *England*.

But, thanks to Heaven and our great Prince, our Choice is not so straightned. A Nobler Principle far is by his Great Example taught us. Be we but Virtuous and Religious, and we may be so in our own way. Modes in Religion ought not, shall not be Compell'd. Those severe *Penal Laws*, that at the first were perhaps well intended, being made upon mistaken Grounds prove Ineffectual, and serve now only to assist the Haughty Clergy-Man in his Insolence, the Angry Lay-Man in his Revenge, and the Ravenous Informer in pursuit of his Prey. And when a Law out lives the reason of it, and becomes inconvenient in the general Opinion of People, (as these have been already Voted by a Parliament) why should it not be in the Princes Power (nay is it not his Duty) to interpose and preserve his People from Destroying one another by bidding such fatal Laws to cease, at least till a Parliament may actually Repeal them? Sure else he bears the Sword in Vain. When he in his great Wisdom sees and observes that *Humane Laws* can't reach the Minds of Men; but that that must and will be Free: And to compel the Body

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without the Soul is but to force Hypocrisie ; from which no Glory can redound to the Prince, nor Safety to his Government. When his Wisdom approves as Necessary what his Piety inclines him to as Just, and for the good of his People : Shall he not then declare, *My People shall be Free, their Consciences no longer shall be forc'd in matters of Religion?* O Great and Gracious KING ! This is to make us Free indeed. A Glorious and Divine Principle. A Principle of Universal Right and Justice, and doubtless most agreeable to the Mind and Will of God, who seems on purpose to have plac'd the Soul out of the reach of Human Power and Compulsion, and not otherwise to be moved then by the Dictates of right Reason, and the gracious Influences of his Holy Spirit. A Principle that carries in it the sum of all Religion, *Impartial Charity* : that carries in it the sum of all Wisdom and Policy, it being the only Principle that can Unite divided Mankind heartily together. A Principle for which our Glorious Prince will ever be Renown'd in after Ages, when it shall be said, *King JAMES the First United the Kingdoms, but 'twas Great JAMES the Second that did Unite the People.* And now I am upon this mighty Theme, to great a Prince; and of so noble a Principle as *Liberty of Conscience*, I should not know when to have done did not my Sheet of Paper grow too neer the end. I will therefore only add this one thing : That Prince that Governs by this generous and noble Principle, his Government does most resemble that of the Deity in Governing the World. God Almighty, the great Author of all our various intellectual as well as outward Complexions, accepts the variegated Services of his different Creatures, and is pleas'd with the Harmony that ariseth from that Discord,

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Discord, since all agree in the Praise and Glory of their great Creator. But no more. I would be glad to have your thoughts of these things, in which, though I conceit my self somewhat in the right, I am sure you will conclude me much in the wrong. I am

Your humble Servant,

September 12. }
1687. }

N. N.

Primus Jacobus Regna Conjunct,
Secundus Corda.

FINIS.
